DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 375 504 EA 026 208

AUTHOR Adler, Louise
TITLE Curriculum Challenges in California.
INSTITUTION Wright State Univ., Dayton, Ohio. Coll. of Education.
PUB DATE 93
NOTE 13p.; For a related paper, see EA 026 172.
PUB TYPE Journal Articles (080) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)
JOURNAL CIT Record in Educational Administration and Supervision; v13 n2 p10-20 Spr-Sum 1993

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Freedom; *Censorship; Conflict; *Controversial Issues (Course Content); *Curriculum Evaluation; *Curriculum Problems; Elementary Secondary Education; Legal Problems; Moral Issues; Parent Influence; Religious Factors; Textbook Content
IDENTIFIERS *California

ABSTRACT

This paper presents findings from a longitudinal study that examined the extent and types of challenges to curriculum in California school districts. A survey of school districts conducted in 1990 yielded 421 usable responses. The second survey, sent in 1991, elicited 379 responses, a 37.5 percent response rate. Findings indicate that the number of curriculum challenges increased by 8 percentage points. Over half of the districts reported that they had encountered curriculum challenges. The most likely reason for the challenges was religious conflict or satanic/witchcraft issues. Most of the challengers were parents who were not likely to be satisfied with the outcome of the challenge, which in most cases resulted in no change in district practices. An exception was that the challenger's child was excused from using the material. Over 40 percent of the districts reported that challenges in other districts were very disruptive, generating communitywide controversy. Nine percent of the districts reported that they would be less likely to adopt material challenged elsewhere, might not consider items known to have caused contentious challenges, or would not consider such materials. Ten tables and three figures are included. (LMI)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

Louise Adler

Curriculum Challenges in California

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
P. Messner
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

ED 375 504

Abstract

Challenges to curriculum in California districts are explored using data from two statewide surveys done in 1990 and 1991 which is also compared to similar data in the literature. Over half the districts reported having curriculum challenged. The number of districts reporting challenges increased in the second year's data. The most likely reason for challenging is religious conflict or satanic/witchcraft issues. Most of the challengers are parents who are not likely to be satisfied with the outcome of the challenge which in most cases results in no change in district practices except that the challenger's child may be excused from using the material. Over 40% of the districts report that challenges in other districts are very disruptive with a communitywide controversy. Nine percent of the districts report being less likely to adopt material challenged elsewhere, might not consider items known to have caused contentious challenges, or would not consider such materials.

According to People for the American Way (1990), California faces more challenges to curriculum by community members than other states. The 1990 and 1991 surveys of every public school district in California on which this paper is based showed that 54.6% had experienced challenges.

These findings are particularly significant because: (a) textbook decisions in California have a great effect on the marketing of textbooks nationally because of statewide adoption and the large number of textbooks purchased with state funds; (b) this is the only current longitudinal data set on curriculum challenges to be reported in the academic literature; and (c) pressure from community members for increased participation in the selection of curriculum materials is in direct opposition to efforts toward teacher empowerment and greater teacher control over curriculum development and materials selection.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Research on Curriculum Challenges

The extent of curriculum challenges has been addressed sporadically by researchers in the last three decades perhaps because challenges are seen as "hot" topics at a particular time, but not as a regular part of the routine of schools and, thus, not worthy of continuous study. Another assumption by "liberals" is that challenges are the result of aberrations in the social patterns of communities caused by conservatives, fringe groups and fundamentalists; thus, challenges will recede in importance as these groups become less popular. One way to diminish the popularity of such groups according to "liberals" is to educate the populace. However, research shows that there is no decrease in the number of challenges in spite of efforts to educate. Finally, some groups believe that challenges only occur in (a) rural areas, (b) California and Southern states, and (c) unenlightened communities, BUT (d) not in my community! These assumptions are not supported by a review of the research in the field.

Between 1956 and 1958, Fiske (1959) led a research project that studied municipal, county, and school libraries by means of 204 interviews in 26 California communities. One of the major findings was the precautionary reaction of many librarians in book selection, which resulted from several highly charged and widely reported "community conflicts" caused by challenges.

In 1977 the National Council of Teachers of English surveyed secondary school teachers who were members of the council on censorship. According to this repeat of a study conducted in 1966, "approximately 49 percent of the returns indicated some kind of attempted or completed censorship" (Burress, 1979, p. 16). "A major conclusion of this report is that censorship pressure is a prominent and growing part of school life" (p. 36). In terms of

EA 026 208

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

geographic location, censorship may occur anywhere: "[It] is not particularly characteristic of the so-called back-woods communities of the country" (p. 22). In 1980 the Association of American Publishers (AAP), the American Library Association, and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development studied censorship using a mail survey of school librarians, principals, and district superintendents. The study concluded that: "challenges to classroom—and, more frequently, library—materials occur in schools in all regions and in all types of communities across the nation" (Association of American Publishers et al., 1981, p. 22).

The most recent study of censorship (McAfee-Hopkins, 1991) used a survey of school library media specialists in secondary public schools in the U.S. to document 739 challenges between 1987 and 1990. "Attempts to censor materials in school libraries occurred in more than one-third of the school libraries nationwide over a four-year period and succeeded in more than one-quarter of these cases...." (*Survey Finds*, 1992, p. 2).

Religious Fundamentalism

Briefly, the literature on the social history of religious fundamentalism in America is critical in understanding the motivations and targets of many challengers. The secularization of the public schools has never been completely accepted by fundamentalist Protestant groups, who see themselves as separate and different from many Christians who belong to "mainline" churches. Marsden (1980) described these fundamentalists as "ideological strangers in their own land" (p. vii). According to the religious right, the Bible says that Satan and his host are "real," devils and witches are not appropriate for children's stories, and fairy tales and stories portraying the use of occult powers even for "good" purposes are considered propaganda for Satan (Adler, 1990 April; Adler and Tellez, 1992).

METHODOLOGY

At the time this research began several types of data were available about current censorship efforts in California. First, case-study descriptions of events in districts where challenges had occurred had been completed by this author (Adler, 1988), and similar descriptions were available from newspaper accounts. A second source of data consisted of reports collected passively by advocacy and professional groups: the American Library Association, National Council of Teachers of English, and People for the American Way. This research used a statewide survey of California school districts to collect data in 1990 and 1991.

Survey forms were mailed in April of 1990 and 1991 containing the following: (a) a cover letter from the president of the California School Boards Association to each board president, (b) a letter to the superintendent from the chairperson of the Educational Congress of California (ECC is made up of 19 constituent organizations including PTA, CA School Boards Assoc., League of Women Voters, and AAUW), (c) a Step I questionnaire with seven questions to be filled out by every district, (d) a Step II questionnaire with 19 questions to be filled out for each challenge a district had experienced, and (e) a cover letter explaining the Step II questionnaire. Districts were assured that they would not be individually identified in reports of the data. Sixteen days after mailing in both 1990 and 1991, more than 25% of the districts in California responded.

A second mailing at the end of May in both years went to 200 districts that had failed to respond. Districts were selected for this mailing to balance the geographic and size distribution of the responding districts. The only difference between the first and second mailings was that the second went directly to assistant superintendents of instruction or curriculum directors instead of the superintendents. Ultimately, 421 districts responded to the 1990 survey, and 103 of the more detailed Step II forms were returned. In 1991, 379 districts returned Step I forms and 118 Step II forms were returned. Survey data were reported to ECC and published by them (Adler, 1990; Adler, 1991).

Throughout this report the data collected each year actually represents two school years. Thus, data collected in 1991 covered 1989-90 and 1990-91, while data collected in 1990 were for both the 1988-89 and 1989-90 school years. Data were collected in two-year blocks because challenges do not fit neatly into a single school year, but may take many months before they are resolved. Some districts noted the overlap in the data collected and may have felt that they did not need to report in the second year. In the future, surveys will be conducted every two years.

The purpose of collecting data over a period of years is to identify any changes or patterns. If the phenomenon being studied is stable, the data would not show changes in magnitude but would be constant. However, the data collected in this study show changes in magnitude over time. Most of the data are presented as a percentage of the sample responding to a given question. In most cases, when discussing changes in magnitude between the 1990 and 1991 data, the difference between the percentages is used rather than the absolute numbers.

WHO RESPONDED?

Three hundred and seventy-nine districts responded to the 1991 survey (37.5% response rate) indicating a strong interest among public school administrators. Representing all of California's counties, the districts that responded to the questionnaire were fairly representative of the districts statewide (see Table 1).

Table 1
District Size

Size of ADA	Statewide*	1991 Data	1990 Data
50,000 and over	0.6%	1.6%	0.8%
30,000-49,999	0.7%	2.1%	1.1%
10,000-29,999	8.7%	14.2%	15.0%
5,000-9,999	10.4%	17.0%	15.3%
1,000-4,999	30.0%	39.6%	37.0%
500-999	12.1%	9.2%	11.0%
100-499	25.9%	13.7%	15.0%
Less than 100	11.6%	2.6%	4.8%

*Note: From conditions of Education in California (p. 50) by PACE, 1988, Berkeley, CA: Author

The largest districts were under-represented in both years' data. Possibly, curriculum challenges in these districts are processed at regional offices making the data unavailable at district offices to which the survey materials were sent.

Similarly, smaller districts were also under-represented in the sample perhaps because these districts lack the administrative support to respond to the questionnaire or that most concerns about curriculum are managed informally and thus not reported. Participating districts are also fairly representative of the statewide education system in terms of the type of school district (see Table 2). Most of the survey responses were completed by superintendents or district office staff (see Table 3).

Table 2
Type of District

Type of District	Statewide 1991*	1991 Data	1990 Data
K-12	28.5%	37.0%	38.7%
K-6/8	60.6%	51.6%	51.9%
High School	10.9%	11.4%	9.3%

*Note: From conditions of Education in California (p. 50) by PACE, 1988, Berkeley, CA: Author

Table 3
Who Reported in 1991

Person Reporting	Step I	Step II
Superintendent	56.6%	21.0%
Assistant Superintendent	19.6%	38.1%
Board Member	.3%	1.0%
Other District Office	21.0%	31.4%
Principal/Asst. Principal	1.7%	8.6%
Other District Employee	.8%	0

HOW MANY CHALLENGES?

Over half of the districts (54.6%) reported having been challenged at some time. Fewer (44.3%) districts reported challenges during the 1989-90 and 1990-91 school years. In 1988-89 and 1989-90, 35.6% of the districts responding reported having challenges. This represents a magnitude increase of over 8 percentage points.

According to the 1981 study by the Association of American Publishers (AAP), the rate of challenges for the period 1978-1980 was lower than found in this study:

> More than one in five (22.4%) of the 1,891 respondents, overall—or nearly one administrator in five (19.2%) and nearly one librarian in three (29.5%)—reported that there had been some challenge to classroom or library materials in their school(s)....(p. 3).

Twenty-two percent of the districts in the 1991 data reported being challenged more than once (see Table 4). Thus, among districts that had been challenged, more than 50% received more than one challenge. This was also the case in the McAfee-Hopkins (1991) research, "the majority of those reporting complaints, or 51.8% reporting one complaint, and 73.7% reported one or two complaints" (p. 135). The data from the current study show a similar rate, 71% of those reporting challenges reported one or two challenges in their district.

For the districts that reported challenges during 1989-90 and 1990-91, more than 374 individual challenges were reported. This is higher than for 1988-89 and 1998-90 when 320 or more challenges were reported. It is interesting to note that the total number of challenges increased even though the number of districts responding decreased by 42.

The challenges reflected in these data were reported by district office level personnel, but some challenges do not come to the attention of district office personnel because they are resolved at school sites. Casual concerns expressed by parents are usually not classified as formal challenges. Consequently, it cannot be assumed that these data represent all the challenges and concerns that are a part of the day-to-day business of schools. The AAP 1981 study reported that half or more of the challenges were dealt with informally by districts.

Table 4
Number of Challenges Per District

Number of Challenges per District	% of Districts Receiving this Number of Challenges 1990 Data	% of Districts Receiving this Number of Challenges 1991 Data
1	43%	49.1%
2	27%	21.8%
3	9%	13.0%
4	9%	6.8%
5	4%	3.1%
6+	8%	6.2%

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Table 5
Type of School Site Where Challenges Occurred

Site of Challenge	% of Challenges 1991 Data	% of Challenges 1990 Data*
Elementary	60.7%	44.5%
Junior High	13.7%	7.0%
High School	14.5%	19.5%
District Wide	11.1%	21.1%

*Note: Additional data: 7-12 1.6%; Unsure 0.8%

The data for the type of school site where challenges occur seem to be changing (see Table 5). The magnitude of challenges at the elementary school level has increased significantly. The Step II data reported in 1990 showed 44.5% for this level, compared to 60.7% in 1991. Some of the districts that reported having challenges in Step I did not return the longer Step II forms; thus, the smaller sample size for Step II of 118 districts in 1991 and 103 in 1990 makes this trend somewhat more speculative. In contrast, the AAP 1981 study reported *"challenges occurred with increasing frequency at higher grade levels"* (p. 4). It would seem that the focus of challenges is shifting from the high school to the elementary school level.

WHAT IS CHALLENGED?

Textbooks were the most commonly challenged type of materials or services (see Table 6). As in the 1990 data, the *Impressions* (Booth, 1988) reading series was the most challenged item; and a small number of districts also reported challenges to the new elementary social science textbooks from Houghton Mifflin. Whereas the data collected in 1990 showed textbooks and library books as being challenged with about the same frequency, the 1991 data showed that textbooks are more likely to be challenged than library books. A single copy of a textbook may cost as much as $40 for advanced courses. Purchasing textbooks for every child in elementary school costs probably $10,000 or more in most districts. The investment of staff time and money in a textbook for every student is far greater than that of selecting a single library book. Consequently, if sustained, this trend will be of serious concern to districts and publishers. In the AAP (1981) study covering 1978-1980, challenges to textbooks constituted 11.5% of the sample whereas challenges to contemporary fiction made up 36.8% of the challenges (p. 4). The current shift toward more challenges to textbooks than library books may be a watershed change if sustained.

Table 6
Types of Challenges by Number of Challenges Per District

Types of Challenges	Total	1	2	3	4	5	6	7+
Textbooks	96	54	6	0	3	1	1	1
Library Books	66	46	4	4	0	0	0	0
Other Material/Serv.	68	55	3	1	1	0	0	0
Curriculum Guide	33	26	1	0	0	1	0	0
Film	25	25	0	0	0	0	0	0
Class Disc./Lecture	25	23	1	0	0	0	0	0
Counselor Services	9	9	0	0	0	0	0	0
Psychologist Services	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nursing Services	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0

A Carnegie Foundation (1988) study of teacher involvement in decision making reported that 74% of the California teachers were very involved in choosing textbooks and instructional materials. Indeed, this was the area in which teachers reported having the greatest degree of decision-making involvement. But over half the districts in the current study reported receiving challenges, many of them to textbooks selected by teachers. Teachers have reacted with dismay over the challenges to the textbooks they have selected. One teacher in a district where *Impressions* was challenged is a good example.

> Teachers have been told that they aren't good Christians, that they're Satanists. Well, I've been telling ghost stories for 24 years. I hate to tell you how long I've been using "In the Dark, Dark Wood." It also makes me angry as a parent. They're trying to deprive my children of a good series [*Impressions*]" (Teacher quoted in local newspaper).*

**Note.* Districts were granted strict anonymity in this study so the specific source of the quote cannot be given.

WHAT IS THE TREND?

In response to the question, "Does it seem to you that your district is experiencing: the same number of challenges as in past years, more challenges than in past years, or fewer challenges than in past years?" the majority of the 54% of districts reporting challenges replied, "the same" (see Table 7). However, the number of districts that report experiencing more challenges has increased by 10.88 percentage points while the "fewer" category increased by 7.43 percentage points. In comparison, the most recent, comparable data gathered by AAP indicated that "of 176 respondents indicating a change in the rate of challenges during the 1978-80 period covered by the survey, as compared to the 1976-78 period, 131 reported the recent rate as 'higher,' while only 45 indicated 'lower'" (AAP et al., 1981, p. 9).

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Table 7
District Perceived Changes in Number of Challenges

Trend	1991 Data	1990 Data
"same number"	49.49%	67.80%
"more challenges"	34.18%	23.30%
"fewer challenges"	16.33%	8.90%

WHY ARE CURRICULUM OR SERVICES CHALLENGED?

The 1990 survey asked respondents to list the reasons for challenges and responses were grouped under general categories. These categories were listed on the 1991 questionnaire, and respondents checked the categories that applied to the challenges in their districts. The most frequently cited reasons for challenges were *Religious conflict"* and *"Satanic/witchcraft"* (see Table 8).

Table 8
Reasons for Challenges

Reason for Challenge	1991 Data	1990 Data
Religious Conflict	21.88%	17.0%
Satanic/Witchcraft	19.67%	23.7%
Violence/Profanity	14.40%	12.6%
Controversial	13.85%	11.9%
Too Sexual	11.08%	13.3%
Not Age Appropriate	9.42%	11.9%
Out of Date/Poor Role Model	6.65%	1.5%
Offensive to Minority	3.05%	8.1%

The most recent, comparable data were collected in the 1977 National Council of Teachers of English study, which found that the most common reason for an objection was language that might include poor grammar, dialect, or use of profanity or obscenity. The next most common reason for objections was sex, or "erotic qualities in the books" (Burress, 1979, p. 17).

Research by Fiske (1959) found politics to be the primary reason for challenges in school libraries, followed closely by sex/obscenity and then profanity. Though these categories of challenges (except politics) were found in the current study, they are no longer the most significant reasons for challenges, particularly the most contentious challenges.

A review of the challenge forms (documentary data) filled out by the challengers and provided by districts reflected a concern by challengers that some children's literature may undermine authority. A further concern related to "self-esteem" was based on the belief that parental or religious norms would be undermined.

Undermining Authority

One of the recurring themes in the challenge forms turned into districts is the concern by challengers that some classic children's literature selections undermine authority. For example, whole language methodology on which the *Impressions* series is based uses classic children's literature rather than stories designed to teach specific words or skills. You will not find Dick, Jane, and Spot in these books, but you will find fables, fairies, witches, and some stories in which people die. One parent who challenged *Impressions* wrote:

> 1. Parents are portrayed in a bad light in stories. 2. Parents don't care about their children. 3. Respect for parents and others in authority is downgraded. 4. Children's opinions are as good as their parent's opinion. 5. Stealing and lying are not always wrong. They are excused or rationalized. (Challenge from a parent)

In her book, *Don't Tell the Grownups: Subversive Children's Literature*, Louria (1990) pointed out that the literature children seem to love portrays children as the central characters who take control rather than depending on adult authority figures. Scholars of children's literature see value in this characteristic of the literature, arguing that stories where children "take charge" give children an opportunity to imagine how to take on adult responsibility and prepare them for their future roles as active adults.

Thus, in the challenged book, *There's a Nightmare in My Closet* by Mercer Mayer (Dial Books), a young boy faces down the monsters that populate his nightmare with his trusty "pop" gun and a warning to the monster to go away or be shot. At the end of the story, the boy allows the monsters to join him under his covers. He does not run to his parent's room for help, but acts independently of adult authority.

Satanic Influence

Another recurrent theme is that some literature given to children by their teachers contains satanic influences. This charge is most common in the challenges to *Impressions* and in books about Halloween such as *Halloween ABC*, which was challenged in two districts.

> I feel this book, *Halloween ABC*, is gruesome, satanic and unappropriate (sic) for elementary children. (From a parent's challenge)

Similar concerns about satanic influence were raised about *Impressions*.

> ...a resident and a ... police officer...[pointed out that] neither the administration or teachers are expert in identifying satanic influences. ...having had training [he] ...believe(s) that there is satanic material in the *Impressions* series. Since Christianity as a religion is not allowed in the public school system, neither should satanism. He believes those promoting satanism are intelligent and dangerous and in the school system. (School Board Minutes)

Unacceptable Language

Profanity is another common reason for curriculum challenges. For example, in a challenge to the Newbery

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Honor book, *My Brother Sam is Dead*, a challenger objected:

> Profanity: damn(13), Jesus (57), Goddam [sic] it (71), you little bastard (84), damn (125), son of a bitch.... We fight daily to keep our children's language pure. They get enough profanity without getting it taught in the classroom.... What alarms me about this is that profanity is not accepted speech at school. (Challenge from a parent)

Examples from the book show the context of this language that was challenged.

> "Who has beaten the British?" Father said. Sam shut the door. "We have," he said, with his back to us as he slipped the latch in place. "The Minutemen. The **damn** Lobsterbacks marched out of Boston yesterday (*My Brother Sam Is Dead*, James and Christopher Collier, Macmillan).

As a result of the challenge to this book, the district requested an opinion from the Office of County Council which discussed the apparent contradiction between school rules against the use of profanity and its use in stories assigned to the students.

> It should be noted that the main character is a boy about the age of the pupils reading the novel and is the character with whom the readers would relate. He does not use foul language or commit anti-Christian acts or deeds. The profanity and any negative religious commentary is going on around the principal character. He is absorbing the world around him and in this way the portrait of life in the Revolutionary War is painted by the authors (County Council opinion).

Self Esteem

Another continuing concern is classroom programs designed to improve students' self esteem such as *Quest* (Skills for Adolescence Curriculum) and *Pumsy in Pursuit of Excellence*. A parent cited Samuel I. Hayakawa to explain her objection to the *Pumsy* program:

> The schools have become vehicles for 'heresy that rejects the idea of education as the acquisition of knowledge and skills' and instead 'regards the fundamental task in education as therapy.' He said that such inquiring into attitudes, beliefs and psychic and emotional problems is a 'serious invasion of privacy' (*Child Abuse in the Classroom*, Ed. Phyllis Schlafly).

Many parents who object to such programs believe that they promote the idea that children can select their own values without being guided by their family and religion.

> Our family believes that God, beliefs and values of the family, the reading of the Bible, etc. can help children feel good about themselves. Children in the second grade do not receive their values, beliefs, etc. all by themselves. This [program] teaches that their values are okay as long as the child has chosen his values without any pressure from parents or church, and has put those values into action (Challenge from a parent).

Sex

Concern about sex education programs was a theme in 21 challenges. The focus has shifted from past concerns about whether there should be sex education to concerns about the content of the programs.

> A group of 60 local parents called Parents Aware, with the help of the state chairman of a group representing conservative Christian churches, lobbied for a more conservative sex education program that zealously teaches **abstinence** until marriage (Newspaper article).

Another related concern is that books may be sexually stimulating or reveal too much of the human body to view. A woman challenged *Adam & Eve - The Bible Story* because:

> ...of the pictures that appear of Adam and Eve *very* [parent's underlining] naked, genitals are prominent vs shading of areas (Challenge from a parent).

The re-evaluation committee formed by the district to consider this challenge responded:

> The committee felt...that this...book has literary and aesthetic merit. The illustrations unite with the text to form a powerful whole. The watercolor drawings of Adam and Eve highlight the essence of the story—that they were naked and were not ashamed. The illustration does not emphasize nakedness. Rather, it emphasizes their ease with being naked in a natural environment (School district document).

Minorities

A small number of challengers claim that something in a book is offensive to a minority group. For example, a parent with an Asian last name challenged a Dr. Seuss book, *And to Think That I Saw it on Mulberry Street*, because it contained the phrase:

> "A Chinaman WHO eats with sticks..." Also there is a picture of...a yellow skinned person with a pigtail (queue). The readers of this book are impressionable (5-7 years old). Using derogatory words and offensive pictures provide a mistaken and skewed view of any human being (Challenge from a parent).

The Houghton Mifflin textbooks series for K-8 Social Studies has also been challenged because of the way ethnic groups and religious groups such as Jews and Moslems are portrayed. Five such challenges were reported in this research. A trustee in a district that decided not to purchase the textbooks said the books are "...an insult to almost every ethnic group in this world." Interestingly, one of the districts that decided not to purchase the series also had been challenged on the previous series, *Human Heritage*, because of alleged racial stereotyping of a group in the texts.

WHO CHALLENGES?

In 1990, the Step II questionnaire asked, "Who are the challengers (parents, community members, non-residents, special interest group members, etc.)? Please be as specific as possible," and left blank lines for answers (see Table 9). Answers were grouped into categories, which were used as the basis for this question on the 1991 questionnaire. Both in 1990 and in 1991, parents were the majority of challengers. It should be noted that more than one category could be checked and may overlap to some degree. For example, some of the parents who were challengers could also be part of a religious group involved in a challenge.

Table 9
Who Challenges

Who Challenges	% 1991 Data	% 1990 Data
Parents	45.96%	65.24%
Religious Group	17.44%	13.37%
Special Interest Group	8.94%	6.42%
Community Members	5.32%	4.81%
Nonresidents	5.11%	3.21%
Teacher/Board Member	5.10%	3.72%
No Response	not used	3.21%

The most recent, comparable data gathered by McAfee-Hopkins also showed parents as the most likely initiators of challenges (64% of the challenges reported). However, there is a very interesting difference between the two data sets. The McAfee-Hopkins data showed that "nearly 20% of the challenges came from principals and teachers" ("Survey Finds," 1992, p. 2). In an earlier article McAfee-Hopkins discussed Woodworth's (1976) work and a study by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction that:

> found that schools showed a tendency to resist censorship attempts from outside the system and acquiesce to similar efforts inside the system...Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction studies found that the selection policy was less likely to be followed when an administrator, teacher, or school board member questioned materials, but that when organized groups, parents, or students challenged materials, the policy was more often followed (McAfee Hopkins, 1989, p. 267).

While the present research found a small percentage of challenges by teachers and board members, no challenges by principals or other administrators were reported. Because the question was open-ended in 1990 there was no possibility that the construction of the question excluded administrators as a category. If librarians were also surveyed as in McAfee-Hopkins' study, a different perspective might have been captured. It may be that norms among administrators against censorship cause them not to self report activities that result in removing or restricting use of curriculum materials.

For a large majority of the challengers this was their first experience as a challenger. Only 18.4% (Step II) of the persons who challenged had challenged school material or services in the past. The 1990 data show a similar percentage (20.3%).

HOW DO DISTRICTS DEAL WITH CHALLENGES?

One district sent a copy of "Helpful Hints for Staff" along with their policy. These hints represent the "professional wisdom" that would probably be endorsed by most California administrators.

Helpful Hints for Staff Involved in Materials Reconsideration Process

1. Be calm.
2. Become informed on opposing viewpoints.
3. Follow established district policy forms and information.
4. Have a file with copies of pertinent forms and information.
5. Keep administration informed.
6. Refer written complaint to the principal for the review committee.
7. Communicate professionally with complainant about results.
8. Defend the principle of the freedom to read and the professional responsibility of the teachers and librarians.
9. Keep informed of community groups.
10. Call colleagues and professional organizations for information and help (School district document).

FINAL DECISIONS

In only a very small percentage of the challenges (11.5% reported in Step II), did challengers get material or services removed from schools which is less than was reported in the 1990 data (13.4%) (see Table 10). Selection and review procedures that never resulted in removal of challenged material would be hard to defend as fair and would assume selection decisions were always correct. Conversely, if challenges frequently resulted in removal of the challenged material or services, it would call into question the professional judgment and academic freedom of the districts' staffs.

The two most likely decisions reported by districts in this research were: (a) to continue to use the challenged

material or service, or (b) to continue to use the challenged material or service but excuse the child of the challenger from using the materials or services resulting in no change in the materials or services available to all of the children except those of the challengers.

Table 10
Final District Decision
Step II Data

Final Decision	% Yes 1991 Data*	% Yes 1990 Data*	% Yes McAfee-Hopkins 1986-89**	% Yes AAP, et. al. 1978-80
Remove material/ end service	11.5%	13.4%	26.1%	22.0%
Restrict use	9.7%	12.7%	21.6%	6.2%***
Continue to use	42.9%	37.3%	52.3%	34.6%
Continue/excuse challenger's child	35.4%	33.6%	NA	8.5%

Notes:
* Columns do not add to 100% because a few districts wrote in other alternatives.
** Research applied to libraries only ("Survey Finds," 1992, p. 2).
***28.5% were others that were restrictive such as "not reordered" (Kamhi, 1981, p. 57).

The National Council of Teachers of English (1977) research found "only about 34 percent of the parental request to censor a book were carried out. However, when members of the school staff complained, in about 71 percent of the cases the book was censored" (Davis, 1979, p. 18). "Of the 145 titles objected to, only 66 were in fact denied to student in various schools throughout the land" (p. 24). A later table indicated that of the 250 book censorship events 141 resulted in no censorship; 97 resulted in removal from class use, from the library, or from the recommended list; and 12 resulted in putting books "on a closed shelf" (p. 30). Thus it appears that about 44% of the books were removed or completely censored. Films and audio visual materials were more likely to be censored (25 censored, 16 not censored) (p. 34).

The AAP et al. research from 1980 found that "of 513 responses, regarding the final disposition of the incident,...about one in three (34.6%) indicated 'challenge overruled,' while 8.5% indicated 'alternate assignment offered at parents' request.' More than one in five (22.2%) indicated 'removal from school,' and nearly one in three (30.%) indicated some other form of action limiting the availability of the material to students within the school (including 2.7% indicating 'destruction of material')" (AAP et al., 1981, p. 7). The McAfee-Hopkins research found that "of the disputed materials, 52.3 percent were retained in the library, 21.6 percent were given restricted access, and 26.1 percent were removed" ("Survey Finds," 1992, p. 2).

It is difficult to discern an accurate trend from data gathered by different instruments surveying somewhat different populations. However, the California data presented here seem to show a lower tendency to remove material than was found in the prior research studies and a greater tendency to excuse the challenger's child from use of the challenged material.

WHAT DID THE CHALLENGERS THINK?

In an attempt to assess the way challengers view the decisions made by districts, administrators were asked what they believed the challengers thought of the decisions they had made: "In your opinion what would challengers say about the outcome you have described above?"

Administrators reported that the majority of challengers were not satisfied with the outcome of the challenge (see Figure 1), but most would say they were either satisfied or got a fair hearing. Treating people fairly is a highly prized quality among educators (Adler, 1992-93), so this finding is to be expected. All of the categories that showed some level of dissatisfaction on the part of challengers increased in the 1991 data over the 1990 data. For example, challengers were more likely (+8 percentage points) to take their children out of school based on the 1991 data.

Figure 1
Reaction of Challengers to District Decisions
Step II Data

	WHAT CHALLENGERS MIGHT SAY	% YES 1991 DATA	% YES 1990 DATE
Not Satisfied	Satisfied	41.6%	49.3%
	Got fair hearing/don't like outcome	42.5%	33.4%
	No one listened/nothing changed/district was nice	16.8%	6.2%
	Treated badly/don't like outcome	6.2%	3.1%
	We'll be back	15.0%	5.4%
	We are taking our kids out of school	14.2%	6.2%
	See you next election	11.5%	9.2%

Note. More than one choice could be checked so the columns do not add to 100%.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ECHO EFFECT

The 1990 documentary data and discussions with administrators suggested the presence of an "echo" effect in districts that heard about particularly contentious challenges. Consequently, three questions were added to the 1991 questionnaire to probe this area. Almost 95% of the administrators reported having read or heard about challenges in other districts. Only 11.87% reported that the challenges were "handled routinely with little controversy," whereas the vast majority, of challenges were either somewhat or very disruptive (see Figure 2).

Figure 2
Knowledge About Challenges In Other Districts

How would you characterize what you remember hearing about these challenges in other districts? (Check appropriate answers.)	
11.87%	*Challenges were handled routinely with little controversy.*
45.76%	*Challenges were somewhat contentious and disruptive.*
40.19%	*Challenges were very disruptive with a communitywide controversy.*
2.18%	*Other.*

Note. More than one answer could be checked, so the numbers do not add to 100%.

Districts were also asked how they were influenced by what they heard about challenges in other districts. Only 11.8% of the districts said that they were not influenced at all (see Figure 3). Nine percent of the districts reported that: (a) they would be less likely to adopt material challenged elsewhere, (b) might not consider items known to have caused contentious challenges, or (c) would not consider such materials. In this small group of districts, material may not be used because of challenges in other districts. For example, a northern California administrator in a district where *Impressions* was challenged reported that an administrator from a neighboring district commented, "We will look at any series but *Impressions*!"

Figure 3
How Districts Are Influenced By Challenges In Other Districts

	HOW ARE YOU INFLUENCED?	% 1991 DATA
	We are not influenced at all.	11.8%
	We are anxious that controversy does not occur in our district.	2.5%
	We plan adoption process carefully to avoid controversies, but we make our own independent judgment.	76.7%
ECHO EFFECT 9%	We would consider items known to have caused contentious challenges elsewhere, but would be less likely we would adopt them.	5.5%
	We might not consider items known to have caused contentious challenges in other districts.	3.0%
	We would not consider adopting curriculum and/or services that caused contentious challenges in other districts.	.5%

Though previous research reports did not use the term "echo" effect, they did refer to the concept. For example, Fiske (1959) pointed out that,

> Despite the fact that one [contentious challenge] took place more than five years before this study was undertaken and the other well over three, the majority of respondents throughout the state not only knew of them but brought them into their discussions spontaneously. As we shall see, a number of both school and public libraries reacted to these conflicts with precautionary or restrictive measures. (p. 54)

Similarly, the AAP et al. (1981) research report also touched on this topic:

> ...Comments indicate that some precensorship results from the 'chilling effect' of previous controversy and the desire to avoid conflict...Such comments provide evidence that the difficult-to-document phenomenon of precensorship does occur in our schools.... (p. 12)

IMPLICATIONS

Parental Discretion vs. Teacher Empowerment

Newspapers and education journals are reporting on the new wave of educational reform which includes teacher empowerment and greater professionalization. Teachers, as shown in the Carnegie study, are very involved in the selection of textbooks. However, if these books are challenged and subsequently removed, the professional discretion of teachers is limited.

Local administrators and school boards are caught on the horns of a dilemma. If they decide the parent is right in challenging a book, teachers are unhappy. If, on the other hand, they decide that the book should remain in use, the parent is unhappy. It is clear from this research that most review committees decide to continue to use challenged material; at the same time, however, it is clear that the debate surrounding the challenges can leave behind a good deal of stress for those involved, even if the decision supports their position.

Increased Number of Challenges

The total number of challenges reported in the 1991 data (374) was higher than that in the 1990 data (320) which is particularly significant as 41 fewer districts reported in 1991. At the same time, the percentage of multiple challenges per district has increased. At the elementary level, challenges increased 16 percentage points over 1990 data. In 1991 textbooks as a category received 30 more challenges than the next highest category, library books.

At the end of the 1980s, California embarked on a significant effort to improve the quality of textbooks adopted by the state. As new textbooks have been adopted, controversies have developed. For example, new science textbooks were challenged because of the

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

inclusion of evolution and exclusion of creationism. Similarly, new reading textbooks were challenged because of objections to satanic influences in some stories. The 1990 elementary social studies adoption was challenged by religious and ethnic groups.

Based on these findings, we can expect more challenges as curriculum changes are incorporated into state curriculum frameworks and textbooks—particularly changes that deal with controversial material. In the past, textbooks were criticized for being boring so children did not want to read them and for not telling the "whole" truth about history. Ironically, efforts to inject interesting and more meaningful material into textbooks have increased efforts to keep such material out of textbooks.

Religion

Religious conflict and *satanic/witchcraft* are the two most likely reasons for challenges (41.55%). The number of times religious groups were identified as supporting challenges increased slightly. Most of the challenges to *Impressions* involved religious groups, and all of the districts challenged on *Impressions* listed either *religious conflict* or *satanic/witchcraft* as the reasons for the challenge (Adler & Tellez, 1992). Challenges that are based on religious beliefs are particularly inflammatory.

> Religious beliefs, democratic values, and the education of children always raise sharp differences of opinion, but when all of these three are joined together and focused on one problem, the debate really becomes **fired with emotion and beset with confusion** (Butts, 1950, p. ix).

CONCLUSION

The press has frequently portrayed curriculum challenges as something new and unique. But the current data seem to suggest that challenges occur all over the state of California, in every kind of district. Administrators report seeing about the same number of challenges, or more, than in the past, so all districts must be ready to deal with challenges as a standard part of providing "common" schooling in a pluralistic society.

Districts have to strike a delicate balance between the challengers' right to petition their government and the public's interest in providing a well-rounded education; between parents' rights to direct their children's upbringing and the rights of other parents and children to be exposed to a wide range of ideas and information; and between the religious sensibilities of the challengers and the professional judgments of educators. This Solomon-like task requires a calm awareness of the dangers of arbitrary actions by educators, board members, or parents that lead to removal of materials or services without the use of due-process procedures.

References

Adler, L. & Tellez, K. (1992, July). Curriculum challenge from the religious right: The Impressions reading series. *Urban Education*, 27(2), p. 152-173.

Adler, L. (1988). *Church-state controversies in public education as a test of isomorphic theories of political action.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Claremont Graduate School.

Adler, L. (1990, April). Decisions fired with emotion. *Urban Education*, 25(1), p. 3-13.

Adler, L. (1990). *Curriculum challenges in California: A statewide survey of challenges to curriculum materials and services.* Sacramento: Educational Congress of California.

Adler, L. (1991). *Curriculum challenges in California: A statewide survey of challenges to curriculum materials and services.* Sacramento, CA: Educational Congress of California.

Adler, L. (1992-93 Winter). School board policy as a control mechanism in curriculum challenges. *Journal of Research for School Executives*, 2, p. 101-110.

Association of American Publishers, American Library Association, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.(1981). *Limiting what students shall read.* Washington, DC: Author.

Booth, J. (Ed.). (1988). *Impressions.* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Burress, L. (1979). A brief report of the 1977 NCTE censorship survey. In J.E. Davis (Ed.), *Dealing with censorship* (pp. 14-47). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Butts, R.F. (1950). *The American tradition in religion and education.* Boston: Becon Press.

Carnegié Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. (1988, September). *Teacher involvement in decision making: A state-by-state profile.* Washington, DC: Author.

Davis, J.E. (Ed.). (1979). *Dealing with censorship.* Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Fiske, M. (1959). *Book selection and censorship.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Kamhi, M.M. (1981). *Book and materials selection for school libraries and classrooms: Procedures, challenges, and responses.* Washington, DC: Association of American Publishers, American Library Association, and Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service NO. ED 210 772).

Louria, A. (1990). *Don't tell the grown-ups: Subversive children's literature.* Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company.

Marsden, G.M. (1980). *Fundamentalism and American culture: The shaping of twentieth-century evangelicalism: 1870-1925.* New York: Oxford University Press.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

inclusion of evolution and exclusion of creationism. Similarly, new reading textbooks were challenged because of objections to satanic influences in some stories. The 1990 elementary social studies adoption was challenged by religious and ethnic groups.

Based on these findings, we can expect more challenges as curriculum changes are incorporated into state curriculum frameworks and textbooks—particularly changes that deal with controversial material. In the past, textbooks were criticized for being boring so children did not want to read them and for not telling the "whole" truth about history. Ironically, efforts to inject interesting and more meaningful material into textbooks have increased efforts to keep such material out of textbooks.

Religion

Religious conflict and *satanic/witchcraft* are the two most likely reasons for challenges (41.55%). The number of times religious groups were identified as supporting challenges increased slightly. Most of the challenges to *Impressions* involved religious groups, and all of the districts challenged on *Impressions* listed either *religious conflict* or *satanic/witchcraft* as the reasons for the challenge (Adler & Tellez, 1992). Challenges that are based on religious beliefs are particularly inflammatory.

> Religious beliefs, democratic values, and the education of children always raise sharp differences of opinion, but when all of these three are joined together and focused on one problem, the debate really becomes **fired with emotion and beset with confusion** (Butts, 1950, p. ix).

CONCLUSION

The press has frequently portrayed curriculum challenges as something new and unique. But the current data seem to suggest that challenges occur all over the state of California, in every kind of district. Administrators report seeing about the same number of challenges, or more, than in the past, so all districts must be ready to deal with challenges as a standard part of providing "common" schooling in a pluralistic society.

Districts have to strike a delicate balance between the challengers' right to petition their government and the public's interest in providing a well-rounded education; between parents' rights to direct their children's upbringing and the rights of other parents and children to be exposed to a wide range of ideas and information; and between the religious sensibilities of the challengers and the professional judgments of educators. This Solomon-like task requires a calm awareness of the dangers of arbitrary actions by educators, board members, or parents that lead to removal of materials or services without the use of due-process procedures.

References

Adler, L. & Tellez, K. (1992, July). Curriculum challenge from the religious right: The Impressions reading series. *Urban Education*, 27(2), p. 152-173.

Adler, L. (1988). *Church-state controversies in public education as a test of isomorphic theories of political action.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Claremont Graduate School.

Adler, L. (1990, April). Decisions fired with emotion. *Urban Education*, 25(1), p. 3-13.

Adler, L. (1990). *Curriculum challenges in California: A statewide survey of challenges to curriculum materials and services.* Sacramento: Educational Congress of California.

Adler, L. (1991). *Curriculum challenges in California: A statewide survey of challenges to curriculum materials and services.* Sacramento, CA: Educational Congress of California.

Adler, L. (1992-93 Winter). School board policy as a control mechanism in curriculum challenges. *Journal of Research for School Executives*, 2, p. 101-110.

Association of American Publishers, American Library Association, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.(1981). *Limiting what students shall read.* Washington, DC: Author.

Booth, J. (Ed.). (1988). *Impressions.* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Burress, L. (1979). A brief report of the 1977 NCTE censorship survey. In J.E. Davis (Ed.), *Dealing with censorship* (pp. 14-47). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Butts, R.F. (1950). *The American tradition in religion and education.* Boston: Becon Press.

Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. (1988, September). *Teacher involvement in decision making: A state-by-state profile.* Washington, DC: Author.

Davis, J.E. (Ed.). (1979). *Dealing with censorship.* Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Fiske, M. (1959). *Book selection and censorship.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Kamhi, M.M. (1981). *Book and materials selection for school libraries and classrooms: Procedures, challenges, and responses.* Washington, DC: Association of American Publishers, American Library Association, and Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service NO. ED 210 772).

Louria, A. (1990). *Don't tell the grown-ups: Subversive children's literature.* Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company.

Marsden, G.M. (1980). *Fundamentalism and American culture: The shaping of twentieth-century evangelicalism: 1870-1925.* New York: Oxford University Press.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

McAfee-Hopkins, D. (1989). Toward a conceptual model of factors influencing the outcome of challenges to library materials in school settings. *Library and Information Science Research, 11*(3), 247-271.

McAfee-Hopkins, D. (1991 Winter). Challenges to materials in secondary school library media centers: Results of a study. *Journal of Youth Services in Libraries*, 131-140.

PACE. (1988). *Conditions of education in California*. Berkeley: Policy Analysis for California Education.

PACE. (1991). *Conditions of education in California*. Berkeley: Policy Analysis for California Education.

People for the American Way. (1990). *Attacks on the freedom to learn, 1989-1990*. Washington, DC: Author.

Survey finds censorship attempts succeed in one-quarter of cases. (1992, 29 January). *Education Week*, p. 2.

Why school book challenges succeed or fail. (1992, January). *News Letter on Intellectual Freedom, XLI*(1), p. 1, 19-20.

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. (1980). *Censorship of IMC materials in Wisconsin schools. Part 1: Focus on middle/junior high schools*. Madison, WI: Author.

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. (1981a). *Censorship of IMC materials in Wisconsin schools. Part II: Focus on elementary schools*. Madison, WI: Author.

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. (1981b). *Censorship of IMC materials in Wisconsin schools. Part III: Focus on high schools*. Madison, WI: Author.

Woodworth, M.L. (1976). *Intellectual freedom, the young adult, and schools*. Madison: University of Wisconsin.

Louise Adler is Professor of Educational Administration in the School of Human Development and Community Services at California State University, Fullerton, California.

Marketing the Schools—A Call for Papers

Glenn Graham and Gordon Wise

The use of marketing procedures to assist schools in their public relations efforts has received minimal attention in the literature. We feel that this important topic deserves greater attention and discussion. As a result, beginning with the next issue (Fall/Winter) of the *Record*, we will initiate a section featuring at least two articles on Marketing/Public Relations. It is our plan to make this a continuing section of the *Record*.

For years we have been working with Ohio schools, employing marketing techniques and strategies, to help pass tax levies and bond issues. We plan to share our findings as part of this new section, but we also want this to be an opportunity for others to contribute.

Please start writing your articles and send them to us. They will be treated with the same review process as all others submitted to the *Record*.